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TRANSFORMING CHURCHES, TRANSFORMING LIVES
God is still speaking, y'all!
Southeast Conference UNITED CHURCH of CHRIST

(as of December 8, 2015)
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Jottings from June: January 15, 2016

But let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. (Amos 5:24)

As we approach Martin Luther King, Jr. Day and the beginning of the week of prayer for Christian Unity, I have been thinking about how we live out justice in our lives and become righteous people in our nation. It is not an easy task. One of the key components to this is knowing our own story. George Santayana is credited with saying, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

Midway Congregational
United Church of Christ
GOD IS STILL SPEAKING
REV DR L T EVANS
Midway Community Wellness & Enrichment Center
Fraser Center East

We will be publishing twelve historical vignettes during this year. I hope you read the one for January about the events that led to the establishment of the Southeast Conference. But we have hidden histories that only one community or a few people know about. The rich heritage and history of the areas of this Conference call us to consider how we have been about the work of justice and righteousness as we founded schools during Reconstruction, worked for accessibility of public airwaves, fought for civil rights and the right to vote for all, and are a beacon of hope and action for the inclusion of all marriages and family configurations in the social and political fabric of this country.

This was made very plain to me as we published and distributed the 50th Anniversary Commemorative Calendars. We had asked churches to send in pictures and important dates in the life of their congregation. One of our historically African-American churches – Midway Congregational Church, Midway, GA – had sent a picture of their worship space. The story that staff was unaware of was that the images we had in our files and in a picture that hung on the wall of the Conference Minister's office was a church they no longer used for worship. And, in the editorial decisions related to the calendar, the picture staff was familiar with was used instead of the picture supplied by the church.

The hidden history was that the church picture we used was from an era when slavery still existed and the treatment of African-American sisters and brothers was brutal and demeaning within the walls of that sanctuary. And so, by using the picture that we did use, it denied the experience of an entire community and reopened painful historical wounds. This is an instance where an apology does not carry any weight to assuage continued denial of a harsh reality and continued disregard for a people's history that has shaped the community.

When we do not share our stories, painful though they may be, it creates a gap in our corporate memory that allows the perpetuation of injustice. I pray that as we journey through this year of jubilee, we may share our stories honestly and fully, and forgive one another and lift one another as we seek to become that beloved community that Jesus built and that Dr. King lifted up.

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